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ABSTRACT

This bulletin describes a first-grade "readiness program" developed at the Aumsville (Oregon) School District to help children who have been found to be at risk in a standard first-grade program. These students attend a readiness first grade designed to assist their development emotionally, socially, physically, and academically and only then go on to the regular first grade; hence, for them, first grade is a two-year program. The program is grounded in developmental theory and research, and it has achieved its short-range goals, though it is still too early to assess the long-range effects. After an introductory overview, the theory behind the program is presented and the steps taken to implement it are described. The second section describes the readiness program in operation: the screening process, the readiness room curriculum, development of motor skills, and classroom activities. The next section discusses results of the program after 2 years, and this is followed by a section covering the highlights of readiness theory and research. A short bibliography is included, along with five appendixes consisting of curricular and evaluative materials used in the readiness program. (TE)

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Marilyn Pheasant

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Preface

Elementary schools have long tried to assist students entering first grade so that they have successful school experiences. This Bulletin describes a first-grade program developed to help children that a series of tests and screening instruments have shown to be at risk in a standard first-grade program. Rather than allowing these students to struggle and, perhaps, fail, the students are placed in a readiness first grade that is designed to assist their development--emotionally, socially, physically, and academically. The program in grounded in developmental theory and research, and it has achieved its short-range goals. It is still too early to assess the long-range effects.

This is another example of a successful, innovative program developed in Oregon schools to meet the needs of their students.

The writer, Marilyn Pheasant, is an OSSC graduate research assistant.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

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Introduction

The small town of Aumsville is located nine miles east of Salem. The attractive, but not elaborate, school facility sits back off a road that leads to the town's business district. The school is surrounded by an area of beautiful farms and acreages of country-dwellers who have built handsome, contemporary homes. According to Toni Hardman, resource coordinator, the population the school serves is a mix of farmers, upper socioeconomic-level country dwellers, and residents of an "affordable" housing area, which is near the school.

School Is Largest Employer

Aumsville School District 11C is a single-school elementary district that has about 450 pupils in grades 1 to 6. It is the largest employer in Aumsville, employing fifty-six people, of whom twenty are classroom teachers and four are certified support (Hardman 1983). The school is the center of community interest and activity.

Although the readiness program is the focus of this Bulletin, the school has a number of innovative programs and activities, such as the A.C.E. program, which recognizes students' positive social and school behaviors, and the large well-supplied curriculum resource room that provides teachers with supplementary, enrichment, or remedial materials for every area of the curriculum.

The school also has a computerized mathematics testing program for every grade level. Running on Houghton Mifflin software, the system provides unit test scoring, exception reports for those students who have not mastered skills in the unit, a resources report that tells the teacher materials that are available to reteach skills, and other

reports.

The Readiness Program

Six year olds in Oregon enter the first grade usually if their birthday is before November 15. But are all six year olds ready for first-grade work?

For many years, experienced educators and primary teachers have known that many six year olds lack the developmental and academic skills needed to be successful in the first grade. Many of these children are later retained because they are unable to work successfully at the level expected. According to developmental psychologist Arnold Gesell, over 50 percent of these school failures could be prevented if children were properly placed according to their developmental age (Ilg and others 1978).

Aumsville School District 11C has established a first-grade readiness program to assist first graders so that they may have a successful school career. This program is based in part on Gesell's developmental theory, but it also incorporates elements from other developmental theorists. In the readiness program, at-risk children who have been carefully screened by a series of developmental tests are placed in readiness first grade. The following year these children go to the regular first grade. Thus, for these at-risk children, first grade is a two-year program.

This Bulletin describes the background of the Aumsville readiness program, explains the screening process, provides "snapshots" of the readiness program in action, and describes its results. The final chapter gives highlights of the theory and research on which the program is based.

Retentions Spur Search for a Better Way

Superintendent/Principal Ernest K. Teal had been concerned for years because many students were retained in upper elementary grades for making little academic progress. He observed that these children's lack of academic success was associated with dislike of school and themselves. Frequently these children were discipline problems also. He believed that there was a better way--a program that would help children early in their school careers before failure and inability to keep up caused problems. This program would meet the needs of these children, help them develop skills that they lacked, and allow them to have successful school experiences and to feel good about themselves and their school.

Teal came to Aumsville three years ago, one year after the arrival of Toni Hardman, Chapter 1 reading specialist and resource coordinator, who shared Teal's philosophy and concern. She had been trained in developmental learning and received additional training in Gesell's philosophy, testing, and methodology at the University of Puget Sound and Western Oregon State College. Her master's project was interrelated with the readiness program.

Wide Range of Abilities

Like many Oregon schools, Aumsville does not have kindergarten. Approximately 50 percent of the children who enter the first grade have not attended kindergarten. Before the development and implementation of the readiness program, it was not uncommon, according to Teal and Hardman, to have some children who were reading on the second-grade level

at the start of the first grade; neither was it uncommon to have children who could recognize only a few letters of the alphabet. These students would be placed heterogeneously in classes of about twenty-seven students. The teachers then screened to form reading groups; often a teacher would have five reading groups. Teachers knew that those three or four children with the least ability and background in each class would have little opportunity to grow, because the teachers could not give these children much individual attention.

The wide academic range of students continued throughout the grades; usually the same children continued to have the same problems. When Teal first came to Aumsville, many teachers wanted to retain students in the third or fourth grade. Teal commented:

> This reinforced my idea that we should do something in the first grade that would lessen the psychological effect of being retained. It is hard on parents, too. They would say why haven't we told them this before, and how come we wait until the third or fourth grade?

Furthermore, the established first-grade placement and screening methods were in direct conflict with the district's philosophy of quality education to meet the needs of individual students (Hardman 1983). The need was evident and the readiness program was planned to meet this need.

Theory of the Readiness Program

The readiness program is based in part on the developmental theories of Arnold Gesell as Hardman explains:

> It is Gesell's position that children should start school and be subsequently promoted on the basis of their developmental age rather than their chronological age. Assessment of developmental age before entrance into school is the preventive tool which could make a substantial difference in a child's overall success (1983, p. 7).

The readiness program also contains elements from the two other perspectives on readiness: the behavioralists and especially the cognitive-developmentalists. As suggested by Piaget, the latter perspective stresses the development of motor skills and cognitive growth; in addition, the children are actively involved in a planned curriculum that also includes many academic readiness activities. When the Aumsville readiness teacher observes the students' motor skill activities, the teacher uses the behavioralists' direct instruction to assist the students in a difficult motor skill for young children--catching a playground ball.

Aumsville School District's readiness program is planned to promote a lower retention rate and a reduced need for special services, to give students a positive self-concept so that they like school and feel successful, to reduce discipline problems, and to make parents and teachers happier.

Steps to Implement the Program

The readiness first grade was proposed to the district's Budget Committee on January 20, 1982. The proposal stressed the wide range of students' skills and experiences. At that time the first-grade classrooms contained eighty students, fourteen of whom were facing possible retention because they lacked many skills and did not meet the district's academic standards to be promoted to the second grade. The Budget Committee unanimously supported the proposal.

On August 9, 1982, the district's administration presented the program to the Aumsville Board of Education. Since the board had also been present when the proposal was given to the Budget Committee, the

board knew of the need for an alternative first-grade program. The proposal was accepted unanimously and continues to receive total support.

The board's major concern was that parents be kept fully informed of what was happening. Board members wanted to be sure that parents did not think if their child was placed in readiness first grade, the child would go to second grade the following year. From the program's inception, the board emphasized the importance of the staff being very open with parents and students. They wanted to be sure that parents understood the placement was for the benefit of the child and that the parents were kept informed of their child's progress.

Filling a teaching position that was vacant at the time, the board hired a mature and thoroughly experienced teacher for the readiness program. This teacher and a one-third-time aide were assigned to a class of eleven students, leading to salary expenses of approximately $35,000 per year. As Teal points out, the board's willingness to spend $35,000 for eleven students when that amount normally provides services for at least twenty-five students demonstrates the board's commitment to this program. Although the readiness program is not cost-effective from a strictly short-term view, the board decided that the benefits it provides for the children psychologically, both in their school experiences and in the prospective lowered retention rate, outweighed any immediate cost factor.

Prior to the start of school, Teal and Hardman held an inservice session for the entire faculty and aides. The program, philosophy, goals, and need to avoid labeling the at-risk children placed in the readiness room were stressed. Hardman believes that the inservice was

critical so that everyone could understand what was happening. Also, whenever staff were asked about the program by townspeople, they would be able to give factual answers that would avoid misunderstanding and inappropriate labeling.

Hardman told of an incident where a parent was overheard speaking to her child about the readiness room and referred to it as the "dummy room." Teal took the parent to his office and explained the program's concept and purpose and the inappropriateness of the parent's remark. The administration is committed to the program and to refusing to allow children to be labeled.

The Readiness Program in Operation

Aumsville School District widely advertises its preorientation program for incoming first graders in the spring. At the preorientation, a first-grade handbook is given to the parents of children who will be entering school in the fall. Although Aumsville does not have a kindergarten, the district does expect children who enter school to have a number of skills. Included in a section of the handbook is a list of "First Grade Entry Level Skills" (reproduced in Appendix A) along with a checklist so that parents may indicate the skills that their child has mastered. Many parents work with their children over the summer, helping them master the skills needed for first grade. In addition, all the private kindergartens in the area, aware of the district's requirements, work with the students on the entry level skills.

The handbook also contains a calendar of suggested activities--helpful in developing cognitive and motor skills--that parents may carry out with children throughout the summer months (see Appendix B).

Despite widespread publicity about the preorientation and the entry level skills expected, about half of the parents are unaware of the district's standards until they come to school to register their children for first grade in the fall.

The Screening Process

During the first week of school, first graders attend only for half days. The children are not permanently assigned to any room or teacher during the first week, but are placed in three classrooms on a temporary basis. The four first-grade teachers--three regular first-grade teachers

and the readiness first-grade teacher--are assigned to the three classrooms on a rotating basis. The teachers rotate into the rooms every forty minutes. In the classrooms, they lead the children through various readiness activities such as shapes, colors, patterns, and some motor activities. All this time, of course, the teachers are informally assessing the children's skills and development. While these activities are going on in the three classrooms, another classroom is set up with stations for screening.

The reading specialist, the speech and language specialist, one of the first-grade teachers, and the learning disabilities specialist do formal testing of the first graders on an individual pullout basis.

The team is efficiently assisted by Resource Secretary Bette Carnine, who has consistently supported the program both with her technical skills and her moral support.

The following tests are used in the screening process:

Brigance K & 1 Screen
Curriculum Associates Inc.

Metropolitan Readiness Tests, Level 1, Form P
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

Teacher-constructed screening instrument
(See Appendix C)

Speech and language screening
Marion ESD

Gesell School Readiness Screening Test
Gesell Institute of Human Development
310 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 96511

The teacher-developed test was created because they wanted additional information to help make their decisions.

Since the school's philosophy is to place children so that they are

neither over- nor under-placed, this screening is very important to help the team determine the placement of each child.

The first year, Hardman, who is trained in Gesell screening techniques, tried to give the Gesell School Readiness Screening Test to all incoming first graders. But the time required to test and score each student (about forty minutes) made it impractical to administer the test to the eighty first graders to be screened. Moreover, most first graders do not require the test. Currently the Gesell test is administered only in cases where more information is needed.

On the basis of these formal and informal assessments, the team meets Thursday of the first week of school and determines a list of possible readiness students. Frequently the decision is easy to make, but in other cases it is very difficult.

It is often assumed that only children from disadvantaged homes are not developmentally ready. This is not the case either in the Gesell studies or in the experience at Aumsville. Middle-class children, depending upon their individual growth rates, are frequently not ready also.

Parents of children considered for readiness first grade are asked to come in for conferences on Friday of the first week of school. If the child clearly is considered a candidate for the readiness program, the conferencing technique is to share the results of the tests with the parents and show them the difference between their child's results and those of children that are more developmentally ready for the first grade. Then Hardman talks to the parents about development.

She frequently uses the analogy of flower seeds--how we can plant

all the seeds in a row, but some plants will come up and bloom much sooner than others. She stresses that we need to give children the opportunity to develop at their own rate. The differences in children's developmental rates show up in many areas, such as bike riding, Hardman points out. Some children can ride a bike when they are four, but others do not learn to ride a bike until they are in the third grade. Everyone accepts this; it is all right if it takes several years before a child can ride a bike. But with school, the situation can be different.

Sometimes it is difficult for parents to accept that their child is not ready for regular first grade. So it is very important for them to hear about developmental theory and to understand that the school wants to do what is best for the child. She explains to the parents that the first-grade team believes it would be better for the child to spend two years in the first grade. The first year would allow them to grow, and then the second year would be the usual quite strong academic program.

In a few cases the team does not know where the child should be. In these cases the conferencing technique is somewhat different. The teachers, explaining that they really are not sure if the child should be in readiness or not, ask the parents for their input. Then they usually ask if they may place the child either in readiness first grade or regular first grade for a month to assess the child in more depth. After that time, they talk to the parents again and try to reach a group decision that would work best for the child. This strategy has worked quite well. Parents are usually very supportive and are willing to work with their children at home.

Hardman described one case where the team was not sure of the

child's placement and placed the child in the regular first grade for a month with the understanding that the mother would help the child at home. Before the month was up, the mother came to the school and said her daughter was not ready for the first grade and should go to readiness first grade. Hardman feels that if they can enlist the parents' cooperation to help the school help their child, it works much better.

As Hardman points out, the decision is not an easy decision: "It is very important because we are taking a year out of a person's life." The Aumsville team is very concerned that they be sure that what they are doing will help the child. They do not look at numbers, for example, and say, "We have a slot, and it will lower the class load in the other rooms." They carefully look at the individual student's needs.

Of course, if a child were to be misplaced in the readiness room or were to enter a rapid growth period that made the readiness room inappropriate, the child would be moved to the regular first grade. However, this has not occurred.

When new children enroll during the year, Hardman interviews their parents and reviews their records. Some can be placed in readiness based on this information. Others are placed in regular first grade with the parents' knowledge that the readiness program is available and that they will be contacted if teachers decide their child would benefit from such placement after a period of observation.

Most parents are very understanding and supportive. Many already recognize that their children are immature or have difficulties in certain areas. In some cases, the parents themselves had been retained after reaching a higher grade and recount how they hated it so much and

hope the two-year first-grade program will prevent their child from being retained.

According to Teal, about 10 percent of the parents have problems with the placement of their child in the readiness room. At the end of the school year these parents will say, "Why isn't my child going to the second grade ?" They are concerned about what their coworkers or neighbors will think if their child does not go to the second grade the following school year. Of course, the parents were told very clearly when their child was placed in the readiness room in September that the program is a two-year first grade and that their child will go to the regular first grade the following year. The parents also signed a permission form (reproduced in Appendix D) for the placement, knowing that the final decision was theirs. In addition, the school was in contact with the parents throughout the year about their child's progress. (Parents of readiness students sign another permission slip when their children enter regular first grade; a copy of this form is also included in Appendix D.)

When this situation occurs, the parent is shown the work/textbooks of an average first grader at the end of the year and the work/textbooks of their son or daughter. This, of course, is done in a very professional manner. The parent is then allowed to make a direct comparison. If the parents are still uncomfortable and questioning, they are shown second-grade materials and told that beginning second graders are going to be expected to be reading and doing math on this level. The parents are asked if they think their child can do this work. "It is very important that this, too, be handled in a professional manner. Because

if the parents are still questioning at the end of the year, they are having problems facing the situation," Teal stressed. In all cases thus far, after looking at second-grade curricula, the parents have decided that the work is above what their child is doing.

Most parents are very supportive of the readiness program; they are happy because they know their children are happy and successful. Most parents thank the school personnel for having a program that allows their child to succeed. Since the program has been in operation, some parents have requested their children be placed in readiness. They know of the program and want their child to benefit from it.

Teal says that he has not observed any of the boys and girls who have moved from the readiness to the regular first grade become upset, bitter, or uncertain because they are staying in first grade. Of course, they will be going on to other teachers and doing regular first-grade curriculum. They become room helpers instead of the ones being helped. They know how to act and where the playground, restrooms, gym, library, and cafeteria are. They can be room leaders instead of followers. What the boys and girls do express to everyone--parents, teachers, administrators, visitors--is that they like school. They are successful, and they like it.

The Readiness Room Curriculum

Although the regular and readiness first-grade curricula are different, the readiness curriculum does follow, for the most part, the regular adoptions of textbooks and the recommended State Department of Education curriculum areas and daily percentage schedule. Since most textbooks have a readiness strand, this strand is used. Where there is

no readiness strand, the teacher, Dorothy Shewey, provides instruction that will lead to the first-grade curriculum. Although the students may study the same skills as in the regular first grade, they study these skills with different activities, so when they go to the regular first grade, they do not do the same work over again.

The Readiness Curriculum includes:

Reading	Meet the Superkids and The Superkids' Club Addison-Wesley
Math	Mathematics Houghton Mifflin, 1983
	Math Their Way Addison-Wesley
Language	Language Skills and Use, Level K Scott, Foresman, 1981
Handwriting	D'Nealian Scott, Foresman, 1981
Health	Study prints Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich Health, 1983
Science	Accent on Science - Readiness Level Merrill
Social Studies	Teacher-made materials until new adoption of 1985-86

In addition, the curriculum stresses the development of motor skills, social skills, and positive self-concept.

Students who have completed the readiness class are not only prepared to do first-grade work successfully; they are expected to function in the average or above-average groups and be leaders instead of followers. As will be shown later, this expectation is fulfilled to a great degree.

Shewey, the readiness room teacher, was chosen particularly because

of her commitment to the education of young children and her experience. Projecting a quiet confidence and personal warmth, she is knowledgeable of the development of children. She challenges her students but never allows them to be unable to achieve in the lessons she presents to them. She has the assistance of an aide for two hours during math and reading instruction.

Development of Motor Skills

The development of motor skills is an important component of the readiness first grade. Large-muscle motor skills are practiced in the handsome, well-equipped multipurpose room. On the day the writer observed the class, students were being tested. Standing in a row at the back of the room while waiting their turns, the students were silent or quietly visiting with someone near them.

The boys and girls were being tested on their ability to walk a balance beam, the top of which was about four inches from the floor. According to McMurrain and colleagues (1979), the objective of walking the balance beam is to develop gross motor skills. Balance is very important to a child's sense of security and feeling that they are in control, so being able to walk the balance beam is a step toward self-confidence.

The next activity required each child in turn to balance on one foot for a count of ten. Balancing on one foot is a more advanced indication that a child's balance and, therefore, general body control is developing (McMurrain and colleagues 1979). Shewey requests the boys and girls to count with her as each student steps forward and stands on one foot with arms out. Every child is given extra chances if needed. Reinforcing

their math skills, Shewey exhorts the students, "I really like it when people count with me." The counting immediately becomes more robust.

Catching a tossed playground ball is next. Before throwing the ball, Shewey asks each child, "What are you going to watch?" He or she responds, "The ball," and catches it.

Hand-eye coordination and control of large muscles are required to catch a ball, making it a more advanced motor skill. Also the distance from which the ball is coming and the time it will take for the ball to reach the child must be judged, and the hands and arms must be prepared to catch it (McMurrain and colleagues 1979). Thus, from walking a balance beam to balancing on one foot, to catching a ball, the testing moved from easier to more advanced skills.

The final activity was a closely matched, greatly enjoyed relay race in which the children were to hop about 12 feet and get a bean bag. It is difficult for some of the boys and girls to hop, but with the teacher's encouragement, everyone does hop. Cheering, laughter, and shouts accompanied this activity.

Classroom Activities

The readiness first-grade classroom is an inviting, well-organized room. An eye-catching, seasonal bulletin board is placed at the children's eye level near a cozy corner with comfortable, low seating by a well-stocked classroom library. Another bulletin board, also at the children's eye level, displays their work. The room is well-equipped and organized into various work areas.

Reading readiness activities are in progress constantly. Some of the students work at their desks, others at various work tables. During

the early part of the class, students by twos go to the back of the room to work at a low reading table with their aide, Lynn Woock. Later the aide moves about the room working with individual children. Shewey also moves about the room working individually with children.

Two boys worked with their patterns, an activity that, according to Hardman, receives much emphasis. To create patterns, students use sheets of different cartoon-type animals that can be colored. One boy ha worked out a complex pattern including both color and animals. This task involves several components of cognitive development. The students must have a mental image of a pattern and then be able to duplicate it. According to McMurrain and his colleagues, "This behavior represents thought processes that precede more complex, intellectual operations" (1979, p. 46).

Students responded easily when asked about their work. One student quickly corrected the observer when she thought he was working on his pattern; he explained that this was not a pattern, but was some of his other work. Then he displayed his pattern, which was in his desk.

The students were also working on the letters Cc, Oo, Gg, Aa, and Dd, in a lesson from the Addison Wesley Reading Readiness curriculum. Although this program is not the school's regular adoption, it provides a stronger phonics approach that has been found to be more effective with these students, according to Hardman. By presenting vowels and consonants together, the program allows students to start reading more rapidly because they can make words from the letters taught. Printing is naturally incorporated into the lesson.

The boys and girls knew what to do and were doing it. They moved

quietly about the room as they completed one task and started another. The teacher and the aide were continually interacting with the students on a one-to-one basis. Despite much activity, the room was quiet and orderly.

During the entire time of the observation, children were never off task nor did they show frustration. As Hardman points out, these students are the ones who would be frequently in trouble in a regular classroom because they have not mastered as many skills as have others in their age group.

The on-task behaviors of the children were particularly impressive. Frequently it is a continual challenge to keep low-ability reading group children on task.

Shewey, Hardman, and Teal all said that the students generally work happily and are content. Shewey said, "I do want them to feel very good about themselves." There was no doubt that those children felt good about themselves because of their ease in talking to other adults about their work and their evident pride as they showed their work.

Results After Two Years

The first students from the readiness room are now in the second grade. Hardman said that she has received many good reports from the second-grade teachers about these students. Because it is school policy not to label students, longitudinal records have not been kept. Nevertheless, Hardman's informal monitoring of the student's progress shows that they have not encountered discipline nor academic problems, and, for the most part, they are achieving in either the average or upper groups.

The first readiness class made positive growth from September 1982 to April 1983 (see Appendix E). The mean score on the Metropolitan Readiness Tests, Level II, Form P, given both fall and spring, showed a mean percentile score in September of 8.55, while in April it was 68.4. These children went on to successfully complete first grade and are now in second grade.

Similar growth patterns were obtained for the readiness class of 1983-84. The mean score in September was 20; in April it was 64 (see Appendix E). (One child--number 2-1 on the list in Appendix E--who grew in score only from 6 to 23 was evaluated and found to have a handicapping condition.)

In 1981-82, before the start of the readiness room program, twelve students or 15 percent were retained from a total first grade of eighty students. After the first year of the readiness program (1982-83), only four students who were on the "watch list" (borderline students who were placed in the first grade and whom the teachers observed all year to see if they will benefit from readiness) were retained. This is 5 percent of

a class of eight-six. Hardman said that during the first year the team was still learning to use readiness tests. In 1983-84, only one child (1.2 percent) was retained out of the regular first-grade class of eighty-three.

There will probably always be problems that are related to a particular child. For example, the child retained during 1983-84 was from a home having severe domestic problems. The child was upset by a situation beyond his or the school's control.

Parents, with the few exceptions mentioned earlier, are very happy with their children's progress in school. Since the program started and with increased parent awareness, fall group scores for all students entering first grade have improved each year.

Hardman reports that the regular first-grade teachers are overwhelmingly positive about the program. They noted that reduced class size and more mature students allowed everyone to proceed with less stress. The teachers said they had fewer behavioral problems, and they were able to help the class as a whole through the curriculum without delays caused when trying to catch students up.

Highlights of Readiness Theory and Research

Gordon, writing in the Encyclopedia of Educational Research, states that readiness is a term that is associated with maturation, development, and environmental stimulation. Educators have long been concerned with readiness because they want to know when students are ready for school and when it is best to introduce various content into the curriculum.

As Gordon points out, developmental psychologists have taken one of three perspectives on the question of maturation and readiness (1982).

The maturationists' perspective is that development is principally biological. Gesell and Neill are advocates of this position. Since maturationists assume readiness is principally a biological function, it is necessary to wait for the appropriate developmental age before a student is ready for any given activity.

Advocated by social learning theorists, behavior modifiers, and reinforcement theorists, the second perspective assumes that development toward maturity is largely environmental. However, they do recognize that it is not possible to have people perform physical acts if they are not sufficiently developed biologically. Associated with this perspective are Hull, Guthrie, Skinner, and Bereiter and Englemann.

The third perspective is a compromise; its advocates assume that development is the result of both genetic and environmental factors. In addition, these theorists assume development also results from the organism's own actions. Piaget, Bruner, and Kohlberg are representatives of this perspective. Adherents are frequently called cognitive developmentalists, cognitive-discovery theorists, interactionalists, or struc-

turalists. From the cognitive-developmental perspective, the child's maturation cannot be accelerated, but development is best achieved in environments that provide cognitive challenges to active children (Gordon 1982).

Arnold Gesell was a pioneer in child development. The Gesell Institute of Child Development at New Haven, Connecticut, continues his work. Central to Gesell's concept of readiness is that children should not start kindergarten or first grade based on their chronological age, but should be placed according to their developmental age. Studies by the Gesell Institute have shown that a high percentage of children were unready for first grade. "It is our position that through proper school placement, perhaps 50% of school failures can be remediated or prevented" (emphasis in original) (Ilg and others 1978). The Gesell Institute has developed a readiness test based on a series of activities that determines the child's developmental age. This developmental age may not be the same as the child's chronological age.

Using readiness tests based upon the work of Soviet psychologists, Polish researchers found that 30 percent of rural Polish children were not ready for chronological age placement in Polish schools; 10 percent of urban Polish children were also found to be unready. Okon stated:

> Since the child's future school success is strongly determined by his school readiness, it proved indispensable to construct school readiness tests which would help point out children with an insufficient degree of intellectual, social, emotional, or somatic development. It was also necessary to provide adequate aid for these children so that the differences could be leveled and an equal start ensured for all (1973, p. 5).

The Polish research seems to bear out Gesell's intention that many children are overplaced in school and that, at least in western cul-

tures, there are developmental sequences that children must attain in order to be successful in school.

Gordon in his review of research on readiness says that the results of efforts in compensatory or preparatory education have been mixed. He singles out some variables, however, that have been shown to affect readiness positively. As a rule, the better the match between child and the educational environment, the higher possibility that readiness will be enhanced. Therefore, the teacher must match instruction to the child's developmental level. Small-group work is preferred to work in large groups, and individual attention is preferred to group interaction. It is important that educators not label children. Also, research shows that children who receive encouragement from both the home and the school are much more likely to meet readiness requirements than children who receive encouragement from only one of these environments (Gordon 1983).

Conclusion

Based in large part on the philosophy of Gesell, but also using a synthesis of the other strands of readiness thought, the Aumsville readiness program has provided a rewarding school experience for children who are chronologically six but do not have the development to be successful in the regular first-grade course of study. These students, shown by testing to be at risk of retention, are given the opportunity to develop and to be successful.

The readiness program also stresses those factors shown by research to promote readiness: developmental placement, small classes with individual attention, no labeling of children, and involvement of parental support to reinforce school efforts.

As Gordon states, "The readiness concept is particularly appropriate for all those interested in providing the best educational experience, one that matches biological competence with the demands of the environment" (1983, p. 1533). This is what Aumsville School District has done.

The district is making plans to begin the state-mandated kindergarten by the required time--fall 1989. Teal said, "If students' needs warrant it, the readiness room will be kept. The point is to help children as soon as possible so that they have successful school experiences." This, indeed, is what the Aumsville readiness program accomplishes.

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Interviews

Toni Hardman, resource coordinator, Aumsville School District, Aumsville, Oregon. Interview, November 2, 1984.

Dorothy Shewey, readiness first grade teacher, Aumsville School District, Aumsville, Oregon. Interview, November 2, 1984.

Ernest K. Teal, superintendent/principal, Aumsville, Oregon. Interview, November 2, 1984.

Appendix A

FIRST GRADE ENTRY LEVEL SKILLS

Child's Name _____ Date _____

Skills that contribute to a successful school experience are listed below. These are questions the school may ask you and your child at the beginning of the school year.

Can your child tell others his or her	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1. first name?			
2. last name?			
3. age?			
4. address?			
5. birthdate?			
6. telephone number?			

Does your child	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
7. recognize (by naming) ten colors?			
8. count by rote to twenty?			
9. clearly write number symbols to twenty?			
10. recognize (by naming) all numerals to twenty?			
11. know the terms more than, less than, equal to?			
12. recite the alphabet?			
13. recognize (by naming) all upper case letters out of sequence?			
14. recognize (by naming) all lower case letters out of sequence?			
15. know the sounds of the consonant letters?			
16. comprehend pictures in books?			

Does your child	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
17. show an interest in books and a desire to read?			
18. recognize five or more words other than his or her name?			
19. recognize differences and similarities in pictures?			
20. recognize differences in objects?			
21. recognize differences in letters?			
22. copy a circle, a plus sign, and a square?			
23. write his/her first name?			
4. write his/her last name?			
25. recite nursery rhymes?			
26. draw a person with ten recognizable body parts?			

Does your child

27. understand instructional words:

color _____ write _____ cut _____ draw _____ make _____

paste _____

28. know how to:

wash hands _____ put on coat _____ blow nose _____ zip pants _____

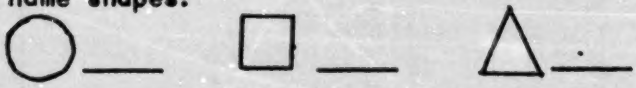
cover mouth when coughing _____ button clothes _____ use the toilet _____

put on shoes _____ tie shoes _____

29. know how to work with:

scissors _____ pencil _____ crayons _____ paste/glue _____

30. name shapes:



Does your child

31. know:

up _____ down _____ top _____ bottom _____ left _____

right _____ inside _____ outside _____ middle _____ above _____

between _____ on _____ first _____

32. follow the pattern of working top to bottom and left to right when appropriate? _____

33. recognize by naming:

head _____ arm _____ leg _____ foot _____ eye _____ ear _____

nose _____ mouth _____ stomach _____ hand _____

34. willingly and cooperatively participate in a small group activity or game? _____

35. continue on a task until finished or it is time to stop? _____

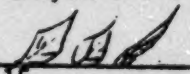
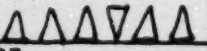
36. have speech that is understandable? _____

37. speak in sentences of four or more words? _____

38. have good physical health and stamina? _____

39. accept absence from parent or guardian? _____

40. follow set rules when participating in an activity? _____

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Count the number of doors in your house.	2 Tie your shoes 3 times today.
3 Make Kool-aid.	4 Find a flat rock - paint a picture on it.	5 Write numerals 1-20.	6 Write the word "cat". Draw a cat.	7 Tell Mom & Dad a story about a cat.	8 Find 10 different shaped . . . 	9 Cross out the one that does not fit . . . d d b d d
10 Make your bed every day until school starts.	11 How many does Mom have?	12 The school library is open - go get a book.	13 Say the A-B-Cs	14 What does a doctor do?	15 Tell parents your phone number.	16 Make your father a Father's Day card.
17 Cut a car out of a magazine and make a picture with it.	18 Ask a friend to play with you.	19 Practice learning your address.	20 Cross out the one that does not belong. 	21 Write the 5 vowels - "a, e, i, o, u, on your fingers.	22 Name 5 things that begin like dog.	23 What does a dentist do?
24 Go on a picnic in your back - yard.	25 Listen to a story.	26 Paint a picture of the story you heard yesterday.	27 Write your A-B-Cs using lower case letters.	28 At 12:00 eat lunch.	29 Write your address.	30 Make a peanut butter sandwich - - cut in half.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Help make lunch.	2 Sing Yankee Doodle Dandy.	3 Write numerals as far as you can 1 - 2 - 3 - . . .	4 Make a flag for the 4th.	5 Cut out 7 words in the newspaper that begin with the letter "G".	6 Count how many times the phone rings goday.	7 Make a mask.
8 Tell a friend your name, address & phone number.	9 Give someone a hug.	10 Count as far as you can.	11 Tell someone in your family your phone number.	12 Bounce a ball 10 times.	13 Find a pretty picture and tell about it.	14 What are 5 words that end like "bat".
15 Turn 3 somersaults.	16 1. Find your shoes. 2. Put on your shoes. 3. Tie your shoes.	17 Write your 1st name using lower case letters.	18 Clean your room.	19 Find the word "and" in a magazine 10 times - circle it.	20 Skip around your house 2 times.	21 1. Draw a wagon. 2. Color it blue 3. Draw a doll in it.
22 Listen to a story.	23 Pick wild flowers.	24 Make playdough 2 cups flour ½ cup salt 3/4 cup water	25 Write these letters "b - h - l - n" learn their names.	26 Say the vowels a - e - i - o - u.	27 Draw a clock that shows bed time.	28 Hop on one foot from the kitchen to your bedroom.
29 Count pennies.	30 Play in the sprinkler.	31 Color a red ball, a blue ball, & a yellow ball.				

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Think of 5 words that rhyme with "sun".	2 Can you stand on your head?	3 Make popsicles out of orange juice.	4 Write these color words - blue, white, green, yellow - color a picture using them.
5 Help with the wash.	6 Learn these letters m, p, b, y.	7 Tell Mom you love her. 	8 What day of the week is it?	9 Name 5 things that begin like "lake".	10 Name 6 animals. Draw pictures of them.	11 Make a pretty card for Grandma & Grandpa.
12 Say 5 words that start like "pig".	13 Lie in the shade and read a book.	14 How many letters in the words "see you in September?"	15 Play school today.	16 Call a friend on the phone. 	17 Count how many rooms in your house.	18 Learn these letters c, f, g, j, k.
19 Can you tell what month school starts.	20 Pick up the trash around the yard.	21 Listen to a record.	22 Eat a watermelon . . count the seeds.	23 Sit quietly & look at a book for 10 minutes.	24 Jump rope.	25 Tell what you do when you cross the street. Stop-look - walk.
26 Work 10 math problems.	27 Count how many times you comb your hair today.	28 Buy your school supplies and label them.	29 Do 10 jumping Jacks.	30 Wow! School starts next week. 	31 Watch Sesame Street today. 	

Appendix C

FIRST GRADE SCREENING

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the items the child identifies correctly.

Letter names

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T
U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t
u v w x y z

Letter sounds

b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x y z

ā ē ī ō ū ă ĕ ĭ ŏ ŭ

Colors

blue orange black green grey purple
yellow red pink white

Color words

white purple blue pink yellow green
grey orange red black

Shapes

square triangle diamond rectangle circle
star oval

Rote counting

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Number recognition

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

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Number concepts

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

Number words

one	two	three	four	five
six	seven	eight	nine	ten

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Appendix D

AUMSVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I understand that my child has qualified for the Aumsville Readiness First Grade program. I understand that this is a probable two year first grade plan for my child, one year in readiness and one year in a regular first grade classroom, but that my child may progress faster if he/she is able.

☐ I agree to placing my child in the readiness room.

☐ I do not agree to placing my child in the readiness room.

_____
Signature

_____
Date

AUMSVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Readiness First Grade

_____
Date

_____ has been exposed to
Student name
the readiness skills for first grade and will be assigned to a standard first grade classroom next year.

I understand the above statement and I ☐ agree ☐ do not agree to have my child placed in a standard first grade classroom next year.

_____ _____
Parent or Guardian signature Date

Appendix E

AUMSVILLE READINESS ROOM

Evaluation - Reading Readiness

Metropolitan Readiness Tests, Level II, Form P

Percentile Scores

Student Number	September 1982	April 1983
1-1	2	56
1-2	7	57
1-3	15	83
1-4	2	51
1-5	1	72
1-6	3	58
1-7	4	76
1-8	1	73
1-9	31	87
1-10	26	85
1-11	2	55
Mean Score (N=11)	8.5	68.4

Metropolitan Readiness Tests

Level I, Form P - Fall 1983

Level II, Form P - Spring 1984

Reading Readiness - Percentile Scores

Student Number	September 1983	April 1984
2-1	6	23
2-2	18	59
2-3	6	48
2-4	35	79
2-5	18	71
2-6	33	74
2-7	33	93
2-8	8	63
Mean Score (N=8)	20	64

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